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PP RUEHDU RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0294/01 0991645

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2738

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1908

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1896

RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2019

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1296

RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1653

RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2075

RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4506

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1151

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//

RUZEHAA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000294

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR L.DOBINS AND E.LOKEN

TREASURY FOR J. RALYEA AND T.RAND

COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2018

TAGS: ASEC EAGR PGOV ZI ECON

SUBJECT: NEW WAVE OF COMMERCIAL FARM INVASIONS

REF: A. HARARE 0281

1B. 07 HARARE 0942

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) According to Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) President Trevor Gifford, 45 white-owned commercial farms in the provinces of Masvingo and Mashonaland have come under siege since April 5. Mobs have forced most of the farmers off their property in a move apparently centrally orchestrated by the GOZ. Looting of the end-of-season tobacco, maize and soya crops is feared. In a further adverse development, there are indications that Zimbabwe's courts do not regard the recent SADC Tribunal ruling of temporary relief for Zimbabwe's white farmers as binding and have begun new prosecutions. END SUMMARY.

45 Commercial Farms Under Siege in Apparent Orchestration

12. (SBU) Gifford told econoff on April 8 that 45 white-owned commercial farms in the provinces of Masvingo and Mashonaland had come under siege since April 5. Mobs had forced most of the farmers off their properties. There had been no violence, but the level of verbal abuse and intimidation was high. In most but not all cases the police had failed to respond to the farmers' requests for help. Although the government mouthpiece The Herald reported today that the police had ordered war veterans off farms, Gifford said that

in many cases in which the police had intervened the mobs had re-invaded the farms. Gifford saw no indication of a letup in this new wave of invasions.

¶13. (SBU) In Gifford's view, the attacks were being orchestrated by ruling party officials. He maintained that the Politburo had given a green light to the action at its April 3 meeting. He said he had information, for example, that an alleged employee of the Ministry of Information had been based in a Masvingo hotel and paying out "rent-a-mob" cash to people to harass farmers in the area. Illustrative of the planned nature of the attacks, a crew of Zimbabwe state television cameramen had been on the scene to film the seizure on April 5 of one of the first farms to be invaded.

¶14. (SBU) The evictions could not have come at a worse time, Gifford explained: The tobacco crop was off the field and in the handling sheds, and the maize and soya were being harvested. Gifford anticipated that the crops would be looted on the seized farms.

SADC Tribunal Relief "Not Binding In Zimbabwe"

¶15. (SBU) In a further adverse development, 14 of the 77 applicants who had joined the Michael Campbell case (Ref B) seeking relief from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Tribunal in Windhoek have also fallen under renewed pressure. Despite the Tribunal having ruled last month that all the applicants could remain on their property pending a hearing in late May (Ref A), Gifford said the

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police had telephoned them in the past days to say that the SADC ruling was not binding in Zimbabwe and they should appear in court the next day (none were subpoenaed) to face charges of contravening eviction rulings. Gifford expected many of the remaining approximately 400 white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe to file to join the Campbell suit as their last hope of keeping their farms.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) The race card and ZANU-PF claims of sovereignty are once again being used by the ruling party to rally the base as it prepares for an unexpected runoff election. Land as an issue may have less resonance, however, than in the past as many rural Zimbabweans are desperate for change. ZANU-PF prospects for victory will be less dependent on rhetoric and land seizures than on ability to intimidate and coerce voters. END COMMENT.

MCGEE